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A Cultural Resources Survey of the
Old Town Bend Revetment
Phillips County, Arkansas--A Negative Finding Report

U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
Memphis District

Jimmy McNeil
Staff Archeologist

August 1983

Abstract

On 9 August, an intensive cultural resources survey was conducted by the Environmental Branch of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Memphis District Staff Archeologist, Mr. Jimmy McNeil, and Civil Engineer, Mr. David McNutt. A failure in the Old Town Bend revetment was surveyed.

The Old Town Bend area is located in Township 4S, Range 3E, Section 14 NW 1/4 of the SW 1/4 of the Modoc, Arkansas-Mississippi Quadrangle Map. The area covers approximately 4.13 acres adjacent to the Mississippi River.

The proposed work includes repair and maintenance of the existing revetment. Maintenance may include grading, replacing the concrete skirt, and riprapping the top bank.

A literature search and a pedestrian survey did not locate any prehistoric, historic, or architectural sites within the project right-of-way.

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Map 1	Overall view of the Old Town Bend Project area.
Map 2	Enlarged view of the Old Town Bend Project area.

Introduction

An intensive survey for cultural resources was conducted by Memphis District Archeologist, Mr. Jimmy McNeil, and Civil Engineer, Mr. David McNutt, on 9 August 1983, within the Old Town Bend revetment right-of-way as directed by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Memphis District. The study was performed as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (Public Law 91-190), Protection and Enhancement of Cultural Historic and Cultural Properties (36CFR 800), and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 898-665).

Project Description

The Old Town Bend revetment is located in Phillips County, Arkansas, Township 4S, Range 3E, Section 14 NW 1/4 of the SW 1/4 at river mile 644R, ranges 291-300, on the Modoc, Arkansas-Mississippi Quadrangle. The project will affect only the proposed revetment maintenance and repair area (Maps 1 and 2). Equipment will be brought in by boat.

Environmental Setting

The project lies within the Mississippi River meander belt where alluvial deposits are more than 200 feet thick over unconsolidated material. Elevations range from 148 feet to 175 feet with a slope ranging from 1 to 3 percent. The higher elevations are mainly natural levees along present or old streams (Hogan and Gray 1974:2). The elevations and slopes do not apply to the man-made levees. Drainage is by bayous, sloughs, and man-made ditches.

The climate is generally warm during the summer and mild during the winter. Occasionally, there will be extremes in heat and cold temperatures. A great deal of the woodlands area in the county has been cleared. However, small areas of trees may be found near the edge of bayous and along the Mississippi River. Primarily, the trees are willow, oak, cottonwood, hackberry, and sycamore. Underbrush consists of cane, honeysuckle, blackberry and wild grape.

Fauna in the area are not plentiful. Mammals include: rabbit, squirrel, raccoon, deer, possibly mink, muskrat, and beaver. Numerous cottonmouths, rattlesnakes, and other reptiles are reported in the area.

Previous Research

Enough work has been conducted in the general area of the project, by such researchers as Phillips, Ford and Griffin (1951), to isolate and date major cultural periods. However, little survey research has been conducted in the immediate vicinity of the project. The most recent intensive survey work in this area was conducted by Soil Systems, Incorporated (1977), and McNeil (1982), both for the Memphis District, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Results of the Records Search

The Arkansas Archeological Survey and the National Register of Historic Places were consulted and no prehistoric, historic, or architectural cultural remains were recorded within the project area.

Survey Methodology and Results

The Old Town Bend revetment project area is approximately 4.13 acres in size. The area is presently in cultivation. The survey limits extended 60.96 meters behind top bank and 273.84 meters along the river edge. The surface behind top bank was perfect for visual survey--the area had been plowed, sufficiently rained on, was dry, and had no vegetation on it. The area of failure provided a clean view of the subsurface stratigraphy. The area profile was: surface sand deposit to approximately 20 cm deep; 20 cm-190 cm was brown sandy clay alternating with light brown sand (each varve about 10 cm thick); 190 cm to unknown was blocky grayish brown clay.

Because of the near perfect visual conditions no shovel test units were dug. Walking over the plowed surface and along the eroding revetment revealed no artifacts, features, nor soil discoloration that would indicate archeological sites.

The survey methodology used does not eliminate the possibility of encountering deeply buried sites. Therefore, it is recommended that any site encountered during construction be protected from further damage, by stopping construction until its significance can be determined by the Environmental Resources Branch, Memphis District, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers in conjunction with the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

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